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ASSESSING MANPOWER IN FINLAND

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Assessing Manpower In Finland.

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1. The need for an examination of manpower

The practice of manpower politics and the drawing up of a suitable training plan is impossible without a thorough, long term investigation into the amount of manpower, its application and the degree to which it is applied. It is impossible to keep an adequate check on these things by holding a census every ten years. In Finland where the assessment of manpower has been in operation only since 1958, there is a general lack of manpower statistics and the rate and scope of these special statistics are unsatisfactory.

It is very important to follow closely the amount and structure of manpower in a country like Finland, where the structure of the sources of livelihood, with agriculture and forestry as the predominating sources of production, takes a noticeable part of the manpower, but where industrialisation is rapidly taking place. For climatic reasons, the need for manpower varies periodically in many occupations and this leads to short, irregular terms of employment and a continual movement of manpower.

(a) The changes in the supply of manpower

When assessing manpower in Finland, it must be remembered that changes in the percent of population making up the labour force are more important to the supply of manpower than is generally realised, and the drawing up of a manpower prognosis presupposes a continual checking of the labour force. The changes in the percent of population in the labour force depend on three things:

(i) Because of a continual rise in the standard of living, there is a continual decrease in the percent of the population in the labour force,

particularly in the younger and older age groups, on account of general education and the longer time spent at school and because of the generalising of pension schemes and the lowering of the retirement age.

(ii) The percent of population in the labour force might increase because of an economic boom and because higher wages attract the working part of the population, who do not work regularly.

(iii) The percent of the population in the labour force increases during the summer period with such workers as school children and students, who only work during that period of the year. We can only find out about seasonal changes in the percent of population in the labour force by maintaining a continual check on the amount of manpower.

(b) Seasonal changes in the labour force

Prognoses of the short term demand for labour, which should be drawn up monthly or four times a year, presuppose seasonal changes in the sources of income of the labour force. The seasonal change is particularly noticeable in the agricultural and forestry fields but also in the building industry. The demand for labour in industry and in domestic service is in Finland fairly steady.

In the current assessment of manpower, the factors affecting the seasonal changes in the labour force are of great importance to industrial politics in Finland, because the seasonal change in the demand for labour is a regular yearly occurrence, and, for this reason, the state has a duty to prevent seasonal unemployment by levelling the demand for labour.

(c) Changes in the structure of the labour force

The source of income structure in a rapidly developing society is continually changing because that part of the labour force earning its living from the prime sources of production is continually decreasing while that getting its income from the finer types of employment is correspondingly increasing. The amount of the labour force in farming and forestry has decreased by 2-3% a year. It is probable however that changes according to the state of the economy, and the movement of the labour force in the various occupations does not only depend on the amount of labour which can be freed by the prime industries but also on the amount of labour which can be absorbed by the other industries. Changes in the

structure of the labour force mean generally speaking, a movement of labour away from the unskilled trades to the technical occupations demanding a skilled labour force. The training of the labour force requires that a continual check is kept on the occupational structure of the labour force and its changes.

2. The current labour force survey

In order to get more information concerning manpower, at the suggestion of the I.L.O. a so-called current labour force survey was begun, similar to those carried out in Canada and the U.S.A. This survey has been carried out by the Bureau of Labour Market Research at the Ministry of Communication and Public Works, and its method has been developed by doctor of agriculture and forestry Lauri Heikinheimo. The intention is to get from these statistics as quickly as possible, a rough picture of the state of employment over the country as a whole, and of the grouping of occupations and above all, of the short and long term changes in these things. It includes large scale mapping of some occupational grouping or its part of the labour force.

Chiefly in this survey, a method has been followed, adapted in other countries for a corresponding assessment of manpower, although it has included certain exceptions from these countries.

The subjects of the survey, which have changed every year, have been picked from the population register over 15 years of age. Each case was considered separately. Every male over 15 and every female over 15 in each community formed a separate unit. In each case, the same percentage was involved, in 1958 10,000 were picked, in 1959 - 60 20,000, and since 1961, 30,000 personal units. The last mentioned corresponds to 0.9% of the population over 15 years old. The unit picked is the person.

For reasons of expense, the method of observation is by postal enquiry. Each person gets 6 or 7 questionnaires a year. One reminder is sent to those who do not reply. The percentage of answers has continually been high so that 85% of the forms sent out have been returned.

The form covers the persons' activities over a period of three weeks. The panelling method has been used, so that in 196[illegible], a changing sub-sample

of the people was covered, every other week 7,500(1/4 of the whole sample) and 15,00 (1/2 of the whole sample) every other week. So, on an average 3/4 of the whole sample was examined every calender month. The positive points about the panelling method are firstly, that as the persons interviewed are continually changing, they do not get tired of the enquiry, secondly, that the work resulting from these enquiries is evenly divided throughout the year, and thirdly that the accuracy of the estimates is sound compared to the size of the sub-sample.

From the information gained from the sample, the following estimations of manpower and time spending can be made:

(a) The population over 15 years old can be divided into those belonging to the labour force and those outside it. The labour force is divided into employed and unemployed and both of these into occupation groups.

(b) The labour force's use of time is divided intc groups according to the internal structure of the sample; the labour input (daily) is divided into occupational groups.

The estimates are counted weekly and levelled graphically to lessen the probability of accidental changes, and from these levelled weekly estimates is reckoned the monthly average.

In the results of the current labour force survey mistakes may arise for the following reasons:

(c) The estimate of those of working age and of those fit to work, which are the independent prognoses from the sample, may differ from the right amount. This method used in Finland presupposes a good population census.

(d) The mistakes caused by the failure to answer should be reckoned by a special enquiry. Because of a lack of funds, this test was carried out only in 1958. It did however prove that those who failed to answer did not differ greatly from the sample.

(e) Wrong information systematically given can cause mistakes which are impossible to discover.

(f) Accidéntal mistakes, or those caused by the fact that only a sample and not the whole population is used, can lead to mistakes

in the results, which can be reckoned as an average mistake.

In reckoning the manpower estimates, we have tried to use the method agreed to internationally and used for instance in Canada and the U.S.A. which was published as a recommendation of the conference of labour statisticians organised by the International Labour Office in 1954.

The possibility of the current labour force survey in assessing manpower and its regional use is at present limited. The division of the workers according to occupation is reckoned in 11 manpower districts, to satisfy the needs of the country's four large regions and of the manpower authorities.

The following statistics taken from the current labour force survey results, are the average for the year 1961:

	Persons in thousands
Population 15 years and over	3, 173
Total labour force	2, 171
Employed	2, 145
Agriculture (ISIC 01)	629
Forestry (ISIC 02)	142
Mining, manufacturing electricity etc. (ISIC 1-3, 5)	483
House construction (ISIC 4)	124
Other construction (ISIC 4)	65
Commerce (ISIC 6)	252
Communication (ISIC 7)	132
Services etc. (ISIC 03-04, 8)	317
Industry unknown	1
Unemployed	26

The results of the current labour force survey have been excellent, Although the investigation has not been going on for long, it has already given a great deal of very valuable information about manpower and its behaviour. By using the method of mail enquiry, the costs for the year 1961 were only about 30,000 U.S. $. It is probable that this method of assessing manpower, in spite of its bad points, suits a small country like Finland more than the method of personal interview where the costs are very much higher.

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